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ABSTRACT

With the "publish or perish" atmosphere of graduate study, a student without a publications list has a difficult time in the job market. Graduate programs in reading should include coursework that will help students break into print. The content of such courses at Rutgers University (New Jersey) and at the University of Houston (Texas) have led to sizable percentages of students with published articles. These courses contained four basic components: (1) a survey of publications that carry professional articles about reading, and directories listing reading journals: (2) identification of the writer's area of expertise through vita writing: (3) organization, writing, and revision of the professional article: and (4) procedures for submitting the article to educational journals, including typing format and cover letter information. Professors who care about the ability of their doctoral students to obtain employment need to develop courses that offer these components for publishing so that doctoral students will be able to compete in the academic job market. (HTH)

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A GRADUATE PROGRAM IN READING THAT HELPS STUDENTS PUBLISH

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The saying, "Publish or perish," is as true for doctoral candidates today as it is for faculty members. Judging from the following ad for an assistant professor's position, doctoral candidates had better publish or they may perish on their job hunt.

> Reading Education: Tenure track position ...
> Desirable qualifications: earned doctorate, evidence of recent research and publication ...
> (Chronicle, 1980)

This identification of publication as a "desirable qualification" recurs week after week in the notices regarding academic vacancies. The graduate student without a publications list has a hard time competing in today's tight job market. So graduate programs in reading should include coursework that helps students break into print.

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When professors consider offering such coursework, they are usually concerned with these two questions:

1) Can how-to-do-it classes in publishing really help sizable percentages of doctoral candidates break into print?
2) If so, what course content do graduate students need in order to write and publish professional articles?

A few years ago, the first question was answered affirmatively in terms of a small population of early publishers from the Rutgers University Graduate School of Education Reading Center (Scheader and Mountain, 1975). Fifteen of the twenty-seven students who received three credits of instruction in educational publishing did break into print.

This same question can now be answered, again affirmatively, in terms of a larger population of graduate students in reading from the University of Houston. Fifty-three of the seventy-five students who received three credits of instruction in educational publishing did break into print.

This evidence indicates that coursework in publishing can help sizable percentages of graduate students break into print, 56% at Rutgers and 71% at the University of Houston.

It would seen worthwhile, therefore, to offer the course content that led to these percentages of success. The content presented at Rutgers University and at the University of Houston included these components:

1. The market: survey of publications that carry professional articles about reading
2. Identification of the writer's area of expertise
3. Organizing, writing, and revising the professional article
4. Procedures for submission to educational journals

Each of these components has a sizable body of content, but all four can receive coverage in an introductory course in educational publishing.

The Market: Survey of Publications in Reading

Graduate students in reading are usually aware of the national journals in their field. So they think first of submitting their articles to these prestigious publications. These journals, however, are highly selective, so they may not be the best places for most beginners to try to break into print.

The state journals are better bets for the novice. So the professor who is teaching the educational publishing class needs an up-to-date list of the state journals in reading and language arts. Each year the International Reading Association publishes listings of its state reading journals and state editors. The National Council of Teachers of English also keeps an updated list of the names and addresses of the editors of its state journals.

Directories can help beginners locate potential publishers. Three good starting points are (1) Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory, (2) Directory of Publishing Opportunities, and (3) Literary Market Place. These directories give current editors, addresses, and

helpful information about content, circulation, and/or editorial requirements.

The same types of information can be found in some articles about professional journals (Axelrod, 1975; Bowden and Mountain 1978, 1977, 1975; Blankenship et al, 1980; Woods 1980). Current articles are probably the best source of information on smaller journals since these articles offer up-to-date information on editors and policies.

Each student in an educational publishing course should make an annotated list of ten to twenty journals in which she might have a chance of publishing. Hands-on acquaintance with these journals is, of course, highly desirable.

The Writers' Areas of Expertise

Doctoral candidates are experts mainly on the things they have already done. They should make that expertise available to others in their early articles (Mountain, 1976).

A good way of helping graduate students identify their areas of expertise is by having them write vitas. As they review their backgrounds, they pinpoint specific experiences that could be the starting points of professional articles. The following one-page vita format (Barker, 1979) helps students compile their information.

NAME

Business Address
Street
City, State, Zip Code
Phone Number

Home Address
Street
City, State, Zip Code
Phone Number

Teaching Experience
Include schools, grade levels and years of experience

Presentations and Workshops
List all workshops, speeches, panels, presentations at professional meetings, and demonstrations

Professional Activities
List all publications, awards, honors, and professional organizations

Education
Include all colleges and universities, degrees, and certificates

The vita actually serves two purposes. Not only does it help the graduate student identify her areas of expertise, but it also serves as her introduction to the stranger who will eventually consider her article for publication. It lets him know her present position, background experience, education, professional activities, and any other pertinent data that might increase her chances of having her article accepted. The vita is enclosed with each article submitted.

A vita should be easy to read. One page is the ideal length. The format should include headings under which the writer can present information concisely in reverse chronological order, with the most recent first. It doesn't matter whether the information is presented in sentences or in topics as long as the writer maintains regularity of style.

Organizing, Writing, and Revising the Professional Article

The safest organizational pattern for a professional article is the traditional threepart structure: introduction, body, conclusion. Graduate students can "get fancier" as they become more accomplished in the writing of professional articles, but for the beginner who is trying to break into print, a tightly outlined structure is best.

The introduction should (1) grab the reader's attention and (2) preview the contents by working in a mention of the subheads that will appear within the body of the article.

Subheads serve two purposes. First, they keep the novice writer adhering closely to an outlined structure, thereby enhancing the clarity of her presentation. Second, they appeal to editors of professional journals. Many editors like to break every page of print with subheads to improve the readability of their journals.

The length of the body of a professional article depends on the type of journal for which is is intended. A general rule-of-thumb is "the shorter the better." Many state journals like to receive complete manuscripts of only five to eight pages, typed double-spaced (Bowden and Mountain, 1978). So the body of a professional article needs to deliver the information quickly and concisely.

The conclusion should be very short. It might offer a review of the main points and a "picture frame" ending that ties back with the introduction.

The actual writing of an article is never easy. Even experienced writers make false starts, scratch out, stare into space, chew

pencils, and rephrase. Some writers need to "speak" their articles to a tape recorder in order to get a first draft. Then they polish.

Polishing involves at least three steps. The first step is to correct all rough-draft errors, awkward constructions, and redundancies before preparing the first typed copy of the article. Then the writer needs to put that copy away for a few days. Second, during those days, the writer should go to the library and do more reading on her topic. On the basis of that reading, she may want to revise the article when she takes a fresh look at it. If so, she should take time to polish the revision before preparing another well-typed copy to show to others. Third, the writer should ask a few people to read the article carefully and give feedback. If the feedback indicates that further polishing is desirable, the novice should rewrite still again.

Procedures for Submission

When the graduate student starts planning where to submit the final draft for publication, she will want to prepare a neat, double-spaced original of that final draft from which she can make plenty of copies. Her name and address should be typed in the upper right-hand corner of the first page. Just the last name is sufficient identification for the other pages. The typist should start the article halfway down the first page, leaving some empty space at the top for editorial notes.

While studying the market, the graduate student should have made a list of ten to twenty professional journals in which she might have

a chance of publishing. From this list she can now select and rank-order the three best prospects. The reason for selecting at least three good prospects is that the writer wants to be ready to mail immediately to her second-choice journal if she receives a rejection from her first-choice journal.

A short cover letter to the editor of the first-choice journal should accompany the submission. The body of this cover letter usually starts, "Enclosed are three copies of my article entitled '....' which I am submitting for publication in your journal." Sending three copies enables the editor to circulate the article to the members of his board more rapidly.

The cover letter might end with a reference to the enclosed vita: "My vita is attached in case you want more information about my background." Often this vita information shows the editor that the writer has the experience and education necessary for writing about the topic of the article.

Very few scholarly journals consider it permissible for a writer to submit an article to more than one potential publisher at a time. Most of them expect their writers to submit to the first-choice journal and await acceptance of rejection before making a second submission.

That first submission launches the novice into the waiting period that is familiar to all writers who try to publish in educational journals. Editors often take months to reach a decision on an article. Sometimes a follow-up letter helps, especially if the student has not received even a notice of the arrival of her article. But usually there's no way to shorten that waiting period.

Finally the verdict arrives. If it's an acceptance, the student rejoices and starts on her next article. If it's a rejection, the student simply types a new cover letter and submits the article to the second journal on her list. Three articles in the drawer bring no accolades. One article accepted on its third submission turns a graduate student into a published author.

* * * * *

Since "publish or perish" is a reality for the academic job-hunter, professors should do all they can to help their doctoral candidates break into print. Coursework in publishing skills does help. So professors who care about the employability of their doctoral students need to develop courses that offer the content described in this article. Students who have been taught how to break into print WILL PUBLISH and WON'T PERISH.

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